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ABSTRACT

Affirmative action issues in selecting and retaining minority faculty and college staff are discussed. Historical and political developments affecting job openings for minorities are briefly reviewed, along with demographic trends concerning the number of minorities of college-going age and their rate of college attendance. Myths about affirmative action are addressed, including the myth that minorities with terminal degrees are not available; that minority women are "prime hires" because they represent two "protected groups"; and that minority science and engineering Ph.D.s are rare and can command top salaries. Issues and suggestions concerning recruiting minority college staff are considered, including: the college president should clearly articulate commitment to affirmative action; the affirmative action officer should report to the president; budget allocations to college divisions should be partially formulated on the basis of the attainment of affirmative action goals; affirmative action officers should meet with each search committee before the screening process begins; and institutions could aggressively recruit minority doctoral students in disciplines where they are grossly underrepresented and then hire them as junior faculty upon completion of their studies. Perspectives on minority staff retention are also addressed. (SW)

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Recruitment & Retention of Minority Faculty and Staff

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by Reginald Wilson

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Until as recently as twenty years ago, higher education in America was overwhelmingly a white male province. Although it remains considerably the same today, the changes that have occurred are the consequence of the accretion of policies developed and implemented since World War II.

Before the war, Hispanics were nearly invisible in academia and blacks were mainly in the historically black colleges. Women's numbers in the study body actually diminished after the war with the surge of veterans occupying the available student slots. However, the initial changes in the diversification of the student body began with the availability of G. I. Bill grants that gave a significant number of black and Hispanic veterans higher education opportunities never available before in American history. It was this generation of educated minorities, in fact, that provided the bulk of the minority faculty and administrators recruited into predominantly white institutions during the substantial opening of opportunity from 1964 to 1974.

Indeed, that decade of opportunity can be directly traced to the consequences of the Civil Rights movement and the subsequent laws enacted to make actual the intent of that movement. One needs simply to recite the names and the dates: The 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 affirmative action Executive Order 11246, the 1967 Executive Order 11375 prohibiting sex discrimination, the 1972 *Adams* decision dismantling segregated higher education systems, and Title IX of the 1972 Education Act amendments prohibiting sex discrimination in "any federally-assisted program." The climate for social change created by the federal executive branch, coupled with sanctions for resisting such change, propelled higher education toward significantly increasing opportunities for minority students, faculty, and administrators. For example, between 1960 and 1980, the number of black students doubled from 600,000 to 1.2 million, with most of that growth occurring in predominantly white institutions. The number of Hispanic students also increased substantially.

It is important to note, however, that those large numbers of minorities entering higher education did not do so, for the most part, by the traditional routes followed by whites. For example, 43% of black and 54% of Hispanic freshmen began their education in community colleges (from which their transfer rate to four-year schools is infinitesimal), compared with 36% of white freshmen. Similarly, many minority administrators were appointed as directors of programs specifically established for minority and disadvantaged students, such as Upward Bound, Trio, and Affirmative Action, while many minority faculty were hired in Black Studies, Latino Studies, and Bilingual Education often as adjunct faculty and lecturers rather than in professorial and tenure track positions.

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However, since then, funding for many of those federal programs has been cut, institutions have been resistant to "mainstreaming" minority faculty and administrators in those programs, and there has been an increase in negative tenure decisions. All of this has contributed substantially to the decline of minorities in such positions.

The social climate of the 1960's and the leadership and policies of the Johnson Administration were directly responsible for the upsurge of participation of minorities in higher education, however marginal or tenuous that participation was. Legal challenges—DeFunis, Bakke, etc.—slowed that upsurge. And now, the regressive leadership and negative policies of the Reagan Administration are directly responsible for the increasing resistance to social justice and equity for minorities in higher education, as well as in most other arenas of American life. The policies of this administration, both in the economic arena and in student finan-

cial aid, bear responsibility for a major share of the decline in minority student participation in higher education. The tragic impact of those policies will have consequences for years to come.

Between 1980 and 1984, the share of national income received by the lowest fifth of the population (where most minorities are) declined from 4.9% to 4.7%. Between 1980 and 1984, the availability of student aid grants as a percentage of total financial aid declined from 55% to 41%. Between 1980 and 1984 available financial aid declined by 21% in constant dollars. Between 1980 and 1984 college tuition increased by 11.8%.[1] In every budget submitted to Congress by this administration, recommendations have been made for either the elimination or the reduction of funds for Pell grants, compensatory education, Upward Bound, Trio programs, bilingual education and, even, school lunches. These policies have been systematically and consistently opposed to those measures that aid and support minority access to and success in higher education.

DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES

A discussion of affirmative action only has meaning in the context of historical and demographic realities. What I am suggesting in this analysis is that, despite the appearance of substantial change and diversity in the academy, that change has been, to a great degree, peripheral and more apparent than real. Moreover, the change that has occurred has been in the outer precincts of the higher education enterprise rather than to any great degree in its heartland. When decline occurs, it is most sharply evident in the most vulnerable part of higher education where most minorities reside.

Here are the facts. The number of black faculty increased up until 1976; it has declined since then. Hispanic faculty numbers plateaued during the same period. In 1979 blacks comprised 7.4% of administrators in higher education, but only 6.8% in 1981; Hispanics again plateaued during the same period at 1.4% and 1.7% respectively. Between 1975 and 1982, black high school graduation rates improved by 29%, Hispanic by 38%. During that same period, black participation in higher education declined by 11% while Hispanic participation declined by 16%. Declines also occurred in the percentage of minority students in graduate and professional programs.[2] For example, in

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1979, at the University of Michigan, the total number of black graduate students was 459; in 1985 it was 234.

When we contrast this dismal and steady period of decline with some other demographic realities, the dramatic nature of the crisis becomes even more apparent.

The majority of public school students in our major cities are minorities and they will be overwhelmingly so by the year 2000. The birthrates of blacks and Hispanics are the highest among American ethnic groups. Forty-two percent of immigration to the United States is Hispanic. By the year 2010, one-third of the American population, *and* the workforce, will be minority.[3]

This would, at first glance, seem to be a propitious time for institutions to move toward racial and ethnic parity. The demographics are all favorable. Minorities of college-going age are increasing while the white 18-24-year-old population is declining. The post-WWII "baby-boom" generation is aging, and it is estimated that, of those in the professoriate, over 50% will be replaced by the end of the century. Despite these facts, the opposite is happening; the presence of minorities in higher education is still declining.

DISPELLING MYTHS

Too often, discussions of affirmative action are essentially "how-to" sessions that assume that the principal reason for the current paucity of minorities in higher education positions is that we didn't know "how to" find them. My suggested alternative scenario, which is rather more complex, reveals an historic pattern of resistance in the academy to meaningful inclusion of minorities in the higher education mainstream, particularly in four-year institutions and research universities. Blacks make up only 2% of faculties in such institutions, Hispanics less than 1%. Indeed, during the *height* of the period *favoring* inclusion of minorities, the plurality of that inclusion was in marginal and peripheral programs and positions most vulnerable to elimination.

Now, in a climate much less sympathetic to social inclusion, the motivation to promote diversity in higher education must come from a higher sense of national necessity that supersedes the narrow self-interest of faculties and makes a more realistic assessment of the resistance to change. At the same time, the need for clear and explicit policies must be recognized and implemented to effect meaningful change.

Before proceeding further, I need to dispel four myths about affirmative action that impede and confuse successful efforts. First is the myth that the problem is "availability" of minorities with the terminal degree. The assumption is that, with minorities holding doctorates being in short supply, those with requisite degrees would be "hot ticket" items and the larger problem would be in finding more.

No available data sustains this assumption. For example, "fewer black scholars entered the professorial ranks in 1979 than in 1975. This decline occurred during a period of time when the number of faculty positions increased by more than 5,000 and the number of blacks receiving Ph.D.'s increased by more than 200."[4] The decision to change the complexion of the faculty rests primarily in the hands of the faculty in selecting their peers. It is clear that there is not sufficiently strong motivation on the part of faculties to make such change without considerable persuasion and *sanctions* by the institutional leadership of the academy. It is important to stress and *repeat* the necessity of considerably increasing the number of minorities with doctorates. But it is equally important to stress that we are not maximally using those who *are* qualified *and* available.

The second myth is that minority women are "prime hires" because they represent *two* "protected groups." Unfortunately false. Those at the bottom of the professorial ladder, in number hired, in rank, and in comparable salaries, are Hispanic and black women.

A third myth is that minority Ph.D's in science and engineering are so rare that they can command top salaries and that many colleges can't afford them. Again, the data disappoint. Science and engineering

minority Ph.D.'s who received their degrees during the same period as their white colleagues and who had similar work activities, attained tenure at 45.1%, significantly lower than the 61.3% attainment of whites. They also attained promotions at a lower rate.

The fourth myth is that there is no necessary correlation between commitment to equity on the part of academic leaders and the number of minorities in those leaders' student bodies and faculties. One can hardly give credence to the protestations of academic leaders in the face of such increasingly typical statistics as the following: Between 1980 and 1984, the number of black faculty at Harvard declined from 34 to 24; from 1979 to 1982, the number of black faculty at the University of Tennessee declined from 39 to 29.[5] Ultimately, irrespective of debates about "quotas," "goals," and "timetables," the final arbiter of higher education's commitment to equity for minorities will be the number of minority students, faculty members, and administrators.

Myths die hard, even in the face of incontrovertible data. Americans are a very "can do" people. We like to think that all we need to tackle difficult problems is the requisite expertise. We do not like to admit that some intractable problems resist solution because we do not want to solve them or, perhaps worse, because we hope they will go away.

ACHIEVING EQUITY

Achieving equity in the context I have been describing is more than simply an exercise in identification and recruitment, as is usually supposed. It is first and foremost an active commitment to equity on the part of institutional leaders who are tough enough to implement clear and measurable strategies to achieve institutionally agreed upon goals, willing to impose recognizable sanctions when those goals are not attained, and ready to reward those responsible for achieving or exceeding those goals. That is a bit more activity than printing on one's stationery, "this institution is an equal opportunity employer."

I do not purport to be an expert in affirmative action. The ideas I now share with you are not technical details but are broad concepts that permeate the most successful Affirmative Action programs I have observed around the country.

▶ To be serious about recruiting and retaining minorities is to begin with the clearly articulated commitment of the university president to affirmative action, preferably through both written and oral communication to all relevant publics—students, faculty, administrators, the board of trustees, and the general academic community. Ideally, those pronouncements should be followed by the development of specific recruitment strategies developed by each division head of the institution, approved by the president, and adopted by the governing board as institutional policy. The affirmative action officer should be seen as an expert counselor to faculty and administrators to assist *them* in achieving *their* goals. The goals *belong* to the faculty and administrators, *not* to the affirmative action officer.

▶ The affirmative action officer should report to the president. The symbolic importance of this direct reporting lets all constituencies of the institution know where the commitment to this program is. That reporting should be on a regular basis and the findings passed on to governing board members for their information and judgment. Affirmative action officers in most institutions report to the director of personnel or vice president for human resources. Their principal duty is counting numbers and filling out federal compliance reports; they have little meaningful role in selection and hiring processes.

A survey of personnel directors in 1979 showed that they ranked affirmative action 6th out of 13 priorities. The same survey in 1984 showed they ranked affirmative action 13th out of 13 priorities.

I repeat, the commitment must come from the president. Most directors of personnel are usually only interested in filling jobs with qualified people. It is relatively irrelevant what they look like. If the dean needs a secretary, she wants one right now. It usually doesn't matter that all the other secretaries in the department are white. If Affirmative Action is to be meaningful, it *must* matter to someone.

▶ Budget allocations to university divisions should be partially formulated on the basis of the attainment of affirmative action goals. Both collegiate institutions and private industry have used variations of this scheme with considerable success. Others have augmented this by constraining deans and department heads to assign classes to part-time and adjunct faculty until they could identify minority and female candidates for vacant full-time positions. Requiring written explanations as to why no minority candidates appeared in the pool often assists affirmative action officers in counseling unit heads to adopt a variety of alternative strategies to achieve their goals and to, perhaps, avoid mistakes committed in the past.

▶ Affirmative action officers should meet with each search committee *before* the screening process begins in order to advise and counsel on appropriate search strategies and the pitfalls to avoid. For example, search committees regularly, both consciously and unconsciously, devalue degrees received from historically black colleges. References from persons not known to search committee members sometimes are undervalued as not coming from the "old boy's network." Similarly, research on minority topics is often perceived as less than first rate and, indeed, sometimes as irrelevant.

▶ Another phenomenon to monitor is the "always a bridesmaid, never a bride" syndrome. Many search committees are sufficiently sophisticated that a minority will always be among the finalists but somehow never gets selected for the position. Here, unit heads, for whom *outcome* measures are operational, should understand: "a near miss is as good as a mile." I recall one classic instance where a

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minority finalist was notified, with regret, by the chair of the search committee that she was not being recommended for a position; at the same time, the personnel department was being assured that the selection process was still going on!

▶ There has been mixed success with the use of vitae banks. Quite simply, their success is only as good as the sincerity and commitment of the institutions using them. Some institutions find them genuinely useful to quickly identify minority candidates for different positions. Others rather cynically use them as a resource for names to throw into the "affirmative action hat" with the tacit understanding that none will make it to the finals. When institutions collect vitae irrespective of the quality of the credentials, it is almost certain they are being used for the latter purpose.

▶ Finally, increasing the availability of minority scholars can also be a result of "growing your own." Some institutions—for example, Washington University in St. Louis and to a limited degree Wayne State University—have had moderate success in identifying disciplines in which minorities were grossly underrepresented, aggressively recruiting minority doctoral students into these disciplines, and then hiring them as junior faculty upon the completion of their studies. One motto can be: "when in doubt, grow your own." Ohio State now leads the nation in producing minority Ph.D.'s.

RETENTION

Once having selected minorities for faculty or staff positions, it is the institution's responsibility to retain them. I use the word "responsibility" deliberately. Having invested the resources and effort to secure these individuals, the institution is certainly responsible for maximizing their chances of success. Among the principal reasons for much of minority lack of success in faculty positions are social isolation and lack of scholarly productivity. A colleague once described a year at a university in Maine to me this way: "the snow was white, all the people were white, and even the buildings were white. My wife had to drive all the way to Bangor to get her hair done. My kids were harassed in school every day. During the entire year, no one invited me to dinner or even for a drink. And nobody knew where you could get grits." He left at the end of the year. It is not sufficient to bring someone into an alien, often hostile, environment without substantial preparation, establishing cultural and community links, and demonstrating that someone cares that you succeed.

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Scholarly productivity is often tied to mentor relationships with senior professors and receiving assistance in gaining entree to grants networks for funding research. Majority scholars do not become productive researchers by accident. It should not be expected of minorities. Often, overload of committee assignments and informal counselor roles to all the minority students on campus, for which little recognition is given, detracts from minority faculty time to do productive research and to write. Here again, mentoring and counseling can assist junior faculty in more carefully apportioning time and effort.

Just as you would not wait until the end of a semester to tell a student she or he is failing, you should not wait until a minority faculty member is up for tenure review before determining his or her probable status. Affirmative action officers and department heads should periodically and frequently meet with minority faculty to discuss their satisfaction with teaching assignments, to inquire regarding student evaluations and feedback from peers, to ask: Are you publishing? Are you working on a research project? Do you need help in proposal writing? Are you submitting to juried journals? Are you asking senior faculty to critique your work?

Making both the access and success of minority faculty and staff the collective responsibility of the university's administration and faculty confirms that only total institutional ownership of and commitment to affirmative action will assure the achievement or equity and diversity in academic staffing patterns.

There are several innovative programs currently in place: New Jersey has instituted a minority fully-funded doctoral program that will underwrite the doctoral study of minorities who are committed to teach in New Jersey colleges upon completion of their studies. The SUNY system is making minority recruitment and hiring a top priority. The state of Florida, in conjunction with the McKnight Foundation, has a black doctorate program that will produce 40 black doctorates a year in perpetuity from an endowment of $24 million dollars. The California State University System and the California Community College System are working on specific recruitment strategies as well as programs to increase minority transfers between community colleges and state universities. And, there are others. Unfortunately, they are too few.

It may seem presumptuous in this national climate of retreat from social justice concerns to be not only espousing the cause of affirmative action, but insisting on its most rigorous implementation. However, since human rights are not determined by majority vote, one must say what is right to do anyway, in order, at a later date, to be able to answer the question: "but what were you saying while all this was going on?"

A society stratified by race and class is not a democracy. In our self-interest as a nation we must extend equitable participation in the institutions of our society to those most systematically excluded from such participation by both *de jure* and *de facto* means in the past. "Good will" and "equal opportunity" are not sufficient. We must make conscious, deliberate, and measurable efforts to overcome the vestiges of past inequality by systematic and effective means that are now at our disposal. We must do so because it is in our self-interest to do so. I am almost embarrassed to add that we must do so because it is right.

NOTES

[1] *All of the statistics are from: Reginald Wilson and Sarah Melendez, (eds.),* Fourth Annual Status Report: Minorities in Higher Education *(American Council on Education, 1985).*

[2] *Ibid, p. 11.*

[3] *Discussed in: Harold Hodgkinson,* All One System *(Washington: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1985).*

[4] *William B. Harvey and Diane Scott-Jones, "We Can't Find Any: The Elusiveness of Black Faculty Members in American Higher Education,"* Issues in Education, *Vol. III, No. 1, Summer 1985, p. 69.*

[5] *Ibid, p. 69.*

[6] *Gaynelle Evans, "Affirmative-Action Officers Say Their Influence on Campus is Waning, Blame Reagan's Policies,"* Chronicle of Higher Education, *November 6, 1985, p. 27.*